

Eppleton Hall Stop
#17 On the Inside

The uniqueness of a ship is often defined, just like people, by what is on the inside. The heart of the *Eppleton Hall* is her propulsion plant. And it has a personality all its own.

This propulsion plant consists of two flue type boilers and two “grasshopper” type steam engines. In its most simple method of operation, the boilers operated like two giant tea kettles heating water and sending steam into the single cylinder of each engine. The pressure of this steam then pushed on the piston which in turn rotated a crank that turned one of the ship’s two paddle wheels.

During the voyage to San Francisco the engines, which came to be named “Nip” and “Tuck”, more than once showed how independent their personalities were. “Nip”, the port side engine, was always described as cheerful and loyal in its reliability. “Tuck”, however, was taciturn, strong minded, and fickle. Never reliable as to whether a task was going to be easy or challenging.

Imagine the stepping in to the engine room and being witness to these personalities interacting. Down below, the boilers, like lungs “...breath in great gobs of fire and exhale equally great amounts of steam...” Turning toward the engines, you see a Rube Goldberg like array of levers, rods, and cranks moving around and back-and-forth in astonishing harmony. Topping it off, the engines perform a mechanical symphony. “Thump-squeak-bang-bang-wheeze-whine-crash. Thump-squeak-bang-bang-wheeze-whine-crash.”

Stepping out of the engine room you feel the cool breeze on your face as the ship slowly steams across the surface of the water. The smoke rising from the stack is the only reminder of the invisible symphony beneath your feet. Ships, you realize, are like people. Often what makes them unique is the unseen.